

L&PS New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety

Division of Gaming Enforcement

John J. Farmer, Jr., Attorney General

John Peter Suarez, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 10, 2000

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Katherine Lyons (609) 777-2403

13 Arrested for Involvement in Mini-Baccarat Cheating Scam

ATLANTIC CITY -- Attorney General John J. Farmer, Jr. announced today that State Police assigned to the Division of Gaming Enforcement (DGE) arrested 13 people who were allegedly involved in a theft-by-deception scam in which they attempted to cheat the Claridge Casino Hotel out of more than \$100,000.

During a three-month investigation, the State Police developed information that a number of men and women, most of Vietnamese descent, were planning a scam at the Claridge. The defendants' scam, which required the cooperation of the dealer, Tam Nhut Ho, 29, of Brigantine, was caught on surveillance as it was carried out Thursday.

"Scams such as the one attempted at the Claridge are extremely complicated, and I commend the fine police work of the detectives involved in the investigation," said Colonel Carson J. Dunbar, Jr., Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police.

The Attorney General said that in the scam, defendants Kevin Dung Ly, 32, of Somers Point and Dong Minh Pham, 34, of Atlantic City served as "recorders." They allegedly began playing Mini-Baccarat, betting at a low level and recording the cards played. It is common in the games of Baccarat and Mini-Baccarat to note the cards being played. When it was time to shuffle the cards, the men stopped playing and left the table. The dealer, Tam Nhut Ho, prepared a new shoe of cards, but performed a false shuffle, which gave those involved in the scam the ability to know how the cards would be dealt. Shortly thereafter, nine different "players" were seated at the table. Because the players allegedly knew the order the cards would be dealt, they bet large amounts on each hand - sometimes as high as \$3,000. In the course of play, the defendants deceptively won more than \$100,000 dollars.

Approximately two hours after the scam began, all nine players were arrested at the table, and State Police confiscated \$90,000 in gaming chips and currency. The recorders and Ho, the dealer, were also arrested within the casino. Ky Van Pham, 47, who allegedly masterminded the operation, was arrested at his home in Brigantine.

"This type of crime may seem victimless, but it does great harm to the businesses targeted. The financial loss inflicted by scam artists who attempt such theft is significant, and I congratulate the State Police and the Division of Criminal Justice's Casino Prosecutions Bureau for the many hours of work that prevented the thieves from getting away with it," DGE Director John Peter Suarez said.

All defendants were charged with second degree theft by deception and second degree conspiracy. They were taken to Atlantic County jail, and bail was set at \$50,000. The case will be prosecuted by the Division of Criminal Justice's Casino Prosecutions Bureau. Each count carries a penalty of 5-10 years New Jersey State Prison with a possible fine of up to \$150,000.

"Thorough investigations such as this one help us to build strong cases, and I thank the State Police for their hard work," Division of Criminal Justice Director Kathryn Flicker said.

Defendants:

Dealer: TAM NHUT HO, 29, BRIGANTINE, NJ

Recorders: KEVIN DUNG LY, 32, SOMERS POINT, NJ
DONG MINH PHAM, 34, ATLANTIC CITY, NJ

Players: HOANG PHUONG NGOC DO, 24, ATLANTIC CITY, NJ

HUNG NAM TRAN, 39, NORTHFIELD, NJ

HUNG VU DO, 28, ATLANTIC CITY, NJ

NGUYET NGA THI NGUYEN, 22, ROCKVILLE, NY

LEIGH FRANKLIN KOCH, 31, ROCKVILLE, NY

PETE JOHN HOAG, 20, BRIGANTINE, NJ

TUAN KIET LE ON, 34, VIENNA, VA

QUAN M. NGUYEN, 21, NORTHFIELD, NJ

HAI MINH NGUYEN, 24, PHILADELPHIA, PA

Co-conspirator: KY VAN PHAM, 47, BRIGANTINE, NJ

These charges are only allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent until or unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

####